

giving freebies of free telephone connections to the employees to Telecom Department;

(b) if so, what would be the estimated expenditure to be incurred to be incurred on this account;

(c) whether PM's Office would also consider similar freebies of other Ministries/Departments giving rent-free accommodation to Urban Development employees, free LPG cylinders to Petroleum Ministry employees, free DDA Flats to DDA employees, free milk and ice-cream to Agriculture Ministry's employees and free power connection the employees of Power Ministry; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Sir, it has been decided to provide certain concessional facilities such as waiver of registration charges, installation charges and bi-monthly rental (at the present level), to the employees of the Department of telecom Services and Telecommunications who wish to take private connections. Estimated financial implications involved are Rs. 24 Crore—Non Recurring and between Rs. 78.3 Crore (for low calling) to Rs. 99.9 Crore (for High Calling) per annum—Recurring. No formal orders have, however, been issued so far in view of stay granted by Hon'ble High Court of Kerala.

(c) and (d) This department is not aware of proposals, if any, initiated by other Departments.

Bifurcation/Privatisation of DTS

1757. DR. DASARI NARYANA RAO:

SHRI NANA DESHMUKH:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Department of Telecom Services is going to be converted as India Telecom Corporation;

(b) if so, by when; and

(c) what are the benefits that are likely to come by such a change?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) to (c) Government have decided to corporatise the Department of Telecom Services and the recently created Department of

Telecom Operations by 1st October 2000. The name of the corporate entity will be Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. The expected benefits from such a change are strengthening of the telecom infrastructure as a whole, and an improvement in the quality of service, which would be possible *inter alia* by the greater flexibility available to a corporate entity in decision making, resource mobilization, the building up of a customer orientation of the workforce etc.

Telephone in villages

†1758. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that decision has been taken to install telephone connections in the rural areas of the country within a specified time schedule;

(b) if so, the percentage of villages provided with telephone facilities by the end of March, 2000;

(c) whether government have made any estimate regarding the use of telephone in villages already installed telephone connections; and

(d) if so, the average number of families out of 1000 families who have become the consumers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government have planned to provide telephone on demand in the rural areas of the country by March, 2002. The percentage of villages provided with telephone facilities by the end of March, 2000 is 61.66.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The average number of persons out of 1000 persons who have become the consumer is 6.8 in the rural areas.

Additional burden on exchequer due to free telephone facility

†1759. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK:

PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether on the one hand Government are withdrawing subsidy on foodgrains, LPG cylinder and kerosene oil and on the other hand it is providing telephones to the employees of telephone department without any registration

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.